

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
HA-05 EUR-12 CU-04 IO-13 ACDA-12 /107 W  
-----051351 100902Z /13

R 100803Z MAR 78  
FM USLO PEKING  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0089  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE  
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE  
USNATO 64  
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PEKING 0648

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PBOR CH CB VM  
SUBJ: PRC POSITION ON SRV-KHMER CONFLICT

REF: MOSCOW 3732

1. SUMMARY: THE PRC'S REACTION TO THE VIETNAMESE-CAMBODIAN  
BORDER FIGHTING HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO PREVENT EXPANSION  
OF THE CONFLICT, THUS PRESERVING A PRO-CHINESE GOVERNMENT  
IN PHNOM PENH WHILE MAINTAINING AT LEAST CORRECT  
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RELATIONS WITH HANOI. SHOULD FULL-SCALE WARFARE DEVELOP,  
THE PRC WOULD PROBABLY BE VERY RELUCTANT TO INTERVENE  
MILITARILY, RESTRICTING ITSELF LARGELY TO VERBAL DENUNCIATIONS  
OF VIETNAMESE EXPANSIONISM AND PERHAPS SOME INCREASE  
IN MILITARY AID TO CAMBODIA. END SUMMARY.

2. PRC OFFICIALS HAVE NOT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE COMMENTED ON

THE POSSIBILITY OF A VIETNAMESE MARCH ON PHNOM PENH OR ON POSSIBLE CHINESE REACTIONS TO SUCH AN EVENT. THERE MAY BE MORE GRIST FOR ANALYSIS IN WASHINGTON. THE FOLLOWING SPECULATIONS REGARDING LIKELY CHINESE MOVES OFFERED IN RESPONSE TO MOSCOW'S REQUEST REFTTEL, ARE MAINLY CONJECTURAL.

3. CHINESE POLICY UP UNTIL NOW HAS CLEARLY BEEN DESIGNED TO AVOID SUCH AN EVENTUALITY. CHINA HAS PROBABLY ATTEMPTED TO HEDGE PHNOM PENH INTO A SOMEWHAT MORE FLEXIBLE STANCE ON NEGOTIATIONS, AT LEAST UP TO THE TENG YING-CHAO VISIT TO CAMBODIA. CHINESE OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN FAIRLY CONSISTENT IN DENYING THAT THERE MIGHT BE ANY MEDIATORY ROLE FOR THE PRC IN SUCH TALKS. CHINA HAS ALSO BEEN AT PAINS TO MAINTAIN AT LEAST CORRECT RELATIONS WITH HANOI, IN ORDER TO AVOID PUSHING THE SRV EVEN CLOSER TO THE SOVIET UNION. THE PUBLICATION IN THE PEOPLE'S DAILY MARCH 7 OF A CONGRATULATORY TELEGRAM FROM VIETNAMESE LEADERS BESIDE ONE FROM KIM IL-SONG SHOWED A CONTINUED EFFORT BY PEKING TO DEPICT ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS OUTHERN NEIGHBOR AS OUTWARDLY NORMAL.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, PEKING HAS ISSUED VEILED BUT UNMISTAKABLE WARNINGS TO HANOI, MOST RECENTLY IN HUA KUO-FENG'S SPEECH TO THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS, NOT TO ADOPT A BIG BROTHER STANCE TOWARDS ITS NEIGHBOR. THE PRC SEEMS TO SHARE CAMBODIAN FEARS THAT THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE CONFLICT IS THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SRV'S DESIRE FOR A "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH PHNOM PENH.

5. IF PEKING'S PRESENT POLICY OF FRIENDLY PERSUASION SHOULD FAIL TO PREVENT A VIETNAMESE MARCH ON PHNOM PENH, CHINA WILL BE FACED ESSENTIALLY WITH THREE OPTIONS: A) DIRECT RETALIATORY ACTION, PERHAPS INCLUDING MILITARY PRESSURE ALONG ITS BORDER WITH VIETNAM; B) INCREASED MILITARY AID TO THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT; OR C) DE FACTO ACQUIESCENCE IN THE VIETNAMESE ACTION WHILE MOBILIZING WORLD PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST IT, AS IN ANGOLA AND THE OGADEN.

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AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PEKING 0648

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

6. OPTION C IS MORE IN KEEPING WITH CHINA'S REACTIONS TO OTHER RECENT EVENTS WHICH WERE SEEN IN PEKING AS MOSCOW-SPONSORED EXPANSIONISM. OF COURSE, RECENT AFRICAN DEVELOPMENTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE FAR FROM CHINA'S BORDERS, WHERE ITS OWN ABILITY TO AFFECT THE COURSE OF CONFLICT WAS EXTREMELY LIMITED. EVEN WHEN CONFLICTS OCCUR NEXT DOOR, HOWEVER, SUCH AS IN THE 1971 INDO-PAKISTANI WAR, CHINA HAS BEEN NOTABLY RELUCTANT TO INTERVENE. A RETALIATORY ACTION ON THE SINO-VIETNAMESE BORDER WOULD NOT AUTOMATICALLY GUARANTEE THE PRESERVATION OF A PRO-PEKING CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT. IT WOULD, CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, IRREVOCABLY SOUR PEKING'S RELATIONS WITH THE SRV, INCREASE SOVIET INFLUENCE THERE, AND PERHAPS REVIVE FEARS THROUGHOUT SOUTHEAST ASIA OF A CHINESE SUPERPOWER.

7. THUS WHILE WE WOULD NOT RULE OUT ENTIRELY A MILITARY REACTION BY THE PRC, IT APPEARS EXTREMELY UNLIKELY GIVEN PRESENT INDICATIONS. IF PEKING'S LEADERS DECIDE TO RESORT TO FORCE, THEY WILL PROBABLY MAKE THEIR INTENTIONS CLEAR WELL BEFORE THEY TAKE ACTION. SINCE THE CHINESE GOAL WOULD BE DETERRENCE, THEY WOULD ALMOST SURELY ISSUE WARNINGS TO HANOI OF POSSIBLE PRC ACTION WELL IN ADVANCE OF ANY MOVE

ACROSS THE BORDER.

8. SHORT OF MILITARY ACTION, THERE ARE OTHER TYPES OF CONCRETE PRESSURE THE PRC COULD RESORT TO IN ITS EFFORTS TO DETER THE SRV. THERE HAS ALREADY BEEN AT LEAST ONE HINT OF ECONOMIC RETALIATION. THIS KIND OF MOVE, WHICH WOULD NOT NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE PUBLICIZED, WOULD BE A MORE LIKELY STEP THAN DIRECT MILITARY ACTION. A STEP-UP IN MILITARY AID TO CAMBODIA IS ALSO A POSSIBILITY, BUT WOULD DEPEND BOTH ON THE CHINESE ABILITY TO DELIVER ARMS AND ON THE KHMER ABILITY TO MAKE USE OF THEM.

9. IN SHORT, WE FEEL THAT CHINESE MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE BORDER CONFLICT IS UNLIKELY AND WOULD BE UNDERTAKEN ONLY EXTREMELY RELUCTANTLY BY THE PRC.  
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